1.3 Book Outline

This dissertation is composed of three parts. Part one includes the in-depth litera-
ture studies on the history of art in Uganda and civil society in the African Postcolony
with an emphasis on civil society debates in Uganda. In the former, I particularly
emphasize on the role of Margaret Trowell for early understandings and conceptu-
alizations as well as collections and archiving of Ugandan art. In doing so I dwell on
the challenges of doing justice to art from Africa without reproducing the colonial
heritage that dominated the discourse on the understandings of artefacts and art
objects from Africa as objects of spirituality or fetish that represent the primitivity
and naturality of western imaginations of authentic African life. Therefore, at the
beginning of chapter two I discuss the terms and wordings I use, and how I under-
stand them in my research, before I move on to a more detailed description of art in
Uganda during the colonial era, at the time around independence, during the years
of dictatorship as well as the re-discovery of pre-colonial roots for inspiration and
local materials to use for contemporary art in Uganda today. In closing chapter two,
I then focus particularly on artforms outside the realm of 'professional' art, which I
have already introduced as frequently being referred to as crafts, handicrafts, cul-
tural crafts, or indigenous art interchangeably, and some of their social, practical
and political functions as well.

Chapter three is dedicated to civil society, its current conceptions, and dis-
courses, inclusive of the demands to decolonize and endogenize civil society to
the particularities of contemporary African realities. It discusses prevalent strands
and trends in civil society in Africa vis-à-vis dominant notions in Uganda, before
turning on a brief elaboration on the origins of the concept, its theoretical, cultural,
and political underpinnings, and thus to the controversies involved when exporting
and re-applying it to foreign conditions. It proceeds with a literature review of
empirical studies on civil society in Uganda and introduces the conceptualizations
of civil society used in this study, in which civil society is understood as political
space embedded in complex relationships shaped by power. In this sense, it is
neither necessarily associated with democratization, nor does it necessarily always
promote progressive ideas.

The succeeding and final chapter of the first part of this dissertation is chap-
ter four, in which I engage in an in-depth discussion on the epistemological and
methodological approaches, the research design and process. I elaborate on the
sampling strategies, methods of gathering data, analysis and interpretation as
well as on quality criteria. Furthermore, I explain the "theory/methods package"
(Clarke et al. 2018: 24) of Situational Analysis according to Adele Clarke (2005), and
its further developments by Adele E. Clarke, Carrie Friese and Rachel Washburn
(2015, 2018; 2022). Although the reflections regarding my own positionalities as a
researcher reappear throughout this dissertation, in chapter four I address and

reflect on this matter explicitly. In closing chapter four, I turn towards the limitations of this research, which, among other things, are indeed related to my own situated positionality, challenges regarding on-site translations and the COVID-19 pandemic, which broke out during my last field stay in Uganda.

The following three results chapters form the second part of this dissertation. The first results chapter presents the main collective social actors (which, with Clarke et al. I refer to as social worlds, and I elaborate on this in chapter 4.4.1) and their understandings of artistic handicraft work and products. As I demonstrate in chapter five, while most social worlds have a broad consensus of what artistic handicraft work and products *mean*, there exist also contestations as well as contradictions in the framings of and discourses regarding the meaning making of artefacts, the artists who make them and their work.

After having provided a more thorough generalized introduction to the situation of inquiry, its main social worlds, invisibilized actors and dominant discourses in chapter five, in chapter six I then focus on the NACCAU, the first case study. Through the in-depth analysis of how social worlds and dominant discourses inform the work, self-understandings, and positionalities of the association, I exemplify how local organizational actors can be both; co-opted by internationalized, neo-liberal notions of commodification of artistic handicraft work in its outward orientation, and a space for mutual support, contestation, negotiation and nuanced differentiation its inward orientation. By displaying the positionality of the NACCAU I reconstruct it as an association 'in-between'; on the one hand it is dependent on structural support and foreign customers and thus needs to submit to their agendas, aesthetic and economic expectations. On the other hand, its members criticize and seek to oppose those very dependencies through building alliances facilitated by artistic products, which allow for different meanings to be associated with artistic handicrafts and the artists who make them.

With chapter seven I leave the urban spaces alongside the dominant discourses and international(ized) social worlds. I introduce two independent handicraft art groups in rural Eastern Uganda. In this chapter, I focus on the groups' work and with how, according to my analysis, they derive meaning from it. Their associated meaning making ranges from a "generational responsibility" that enables a rite of passage from boyhood into manhood and introduces young men as prospect political and cultural leaders of the community and husbands who demonstrated their braveness to conviviality (Nyamnjoh, 2017a, 2018). Francis B. Nyamnjoh understands conviviality as the recognition of being incomplete, whereby individuals and groups embrace this incompleteness, which encourages them to reach out to others and to jointly explore ways of complementing one another with the aim of making each other more "efficacious" (ibid 2017: 341) in relationships and sociality – without ever aiming at completion. I close this chapter with the argument that in spite of organizational and structural differences as well as their differences in objective formulation, both

groups introduced here in more detail could be reconstructed and recognized as local civil society actors who use the agency of their artwork to push forward their explicitly or implicitly articulated agendas.

The conclusion marks the final part of this dissertation. It includes a return to the major findings of the empirical analysis and a discussion in the light of locally grounded conceptions of civil society, the meta-narrative of development as well as the need for homegrown conceptions and pluridisciplinarity in meaning making of artistic articulation; be it in the private, the semi-public, or public spaces. Finally, by zooming out of the particular situatedness of the research at hand, implications that move beyond the findings of this research are addressed.

1.4 Theory and Methodology

Introduction to Theory and Methodology

This dissertation builds on a number of theoretical and methodological assumptions that frame and situate the epistemological perspectives I applied throughout the research trajectory. As beforementioned, it is grounded in critical thoughts informed by postcolonial perspectives. These bear three major epistemological assumptions, and all fundamentally inform this research. The first assumption is that colonial hegemony sustained and sustains to exist even after the formal ending of the colonial period. Postcolonial theories acknowledge that colonial historie(s) are closely interwoven with global power imbalances that continue to feed the mechanisms of exploitation of people of the so-called Global South (Comaroff and Comaroff, 2006b, 2018; Mbembe, 2001, 2021; McEwan, 2019; Quintero and Garbe, 2013). Second, influential postcolonial works such as *Orientalism* (1994 [1978]) by Edward Said and *Can the Subaltern Speak?* (1988) by Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak emphasize how the formerly colonized *Others* are constructed within the frameworks created by the Anglo-European West. In a critical discussion of the term *Colonialism*, John L. and Jean Comaroff (2018) disclose the differences between colonialisms overseas, but also refer to the similarities with the rural and peasant population in the home countries of the colonizers (ibid). The periphery, which was established by the aristocracy to be able to consider itself the center, was applied abroad as well, and since the *Enlightenment* era extended to racialization in the colonies, colonized people were denied their histories, their societal and educational systems, their aesthetic taste, their religious beliefs, and their ways to make sense of the world and all things living upon it (ibid). In the process of their subjectification (Foucault, 1982), the formerly colonized *Others* were and continue to be discursively constituted into subjects by Anglo-American perceptions of truth, which frame the possibilities and boundaries of